

Making Inferences

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Make inferences from text.
- Make inferences about setting, plot, and character in literature.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 69
- **Teaching Model**, from “President Cleveland, Where Are You?” p. 70
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 71–72
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 73

You will also need:

- Transparency: **Graphic Organizer**, Making Inferences

Teach

1. **Inferences:** Pass out the **Lesson Summary**, and guide students through the **Academic Vocabulary**. Explain that making an **inference** is the process of making a logical guess based on evidence and one’s own personal knowledge and experience.
2. **Teaching Inferences:** Explain to students that making an inference is like detective work. If you see a certain expression on your teacher’s face, you might be able to infer that your test does not have a good grade. The expression of doubt or disappointment is the clue. Past experience of seeing this expression is the knowledge that helps. Use the **Lesson Summary** to introduce the steps of making an inference:
 - **Clues or What is known:** Your teacher has a puzzled scowl, followed by raised eyebrows and a sad head shake.
 - **Past experience:** When have you seen this sequence of expressions before?
 - **Links and Similarities:** Decide if a link exists between your past experience and this one. Ask yourself if the situations are close enough to make a logical assumption.
 - **Inference:** Since, in the past, your teacher was also handing back tests, and this special head shake indicated a bad grade. You can infer that you earned a poor grade on this test too.

Point out that past experience must relate closely to the new situation in order for you to make a valid inference. Riding a bicycle, for example, would not help you understand text about piloting a jet.

3. **Inferences about Story Details:** Explain that writers do not always tell the setting, character traits, or events in a story. Instead, they describe details and depend on readers to make inferences. Write or read aloud the following description of setting: *Inside the tree, a tiny room had been carved, complete with bed and desk. Shelves full of specimens of every kind of forest life lined the rough round walls.*
 - Ask students to infer details revealed by the setting: What is the time and place of the story? What can you tell about the character who may inhabit the story?

(Sample: The setting is a forest, long ago, or very remote from society. The character may be a hermit, a scientist, or a wizard of some sort.)

- 4. Guided Practice:** Pass out copies of the **Teaching Model**, “President Cleveland, Where Are You?” Have students read the passage. Guide student-volunteers to make inferences about setting, character, and plot. Use the transparency **Graphic Organizer** to fill in any valid evidence, relevant prior knowledge, and valid inferences:

Setting:

- **Evidence:** The narrator describes collectible cowboy cards that come with packs of gum. The packs cost five cents each.
- **Prior Knowledge and Experience:** Today, you can buy collectable cards that feature sports stars or video game characters. Cowboys were more popular in the past. Now, a pack of gum with a collectable card would cost much more than five cents.
- **Inference:** The story takes place in America, several generations ago (mid-twentieth century).

Character:

- **Evidence:** To the narrator, the arrival of new card packs is “the most exciting thing in the world.”
- **Prior Knowledge and Experience:** Generally young children become excited about things like this, not adults.
- **Inference:** The narrator is a child.

QUICK CHECK. Ask student volunteers to name three steps in making inferences from a text. (*Making inferences involves 1) noticing text evidence or details 2) connecting the evidence to past knowledge, and 3) coming to a logical understanding about what is happening “between the lines,” or is unstated in the text.*)

Practice and Apply

Practice activities for making inferences appear on pp. 71–72.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level and above-level students.

Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet A

1. *Experience/Knowledge—Spanish. My Inference—from a Spanish-speaking country; of Hispanic origin*
2. *Experience/Knowledge—usually cars match the period of the story within a decade. A poor family might be driving an older car. My Inference—early in the 1950s*

Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet B

1. ***What Is Known**—Montre is not on Earth. He is human but Earth is not his home. Earth can be seen from where he is. **Experience/Knowledge**—At present, no human lives outside the Earth. To see the Earth from far away, you would have to be on Mars or*

MAKING INFERENCES, CONTINUED

*the moon, or in a spaceship. **My Inference**—The story is set in the future, perhaps in a space colony on Mars or the moon or on a space station.*

- 2. What Is Known**—Despite his words, Montre hesitates before taking action. He is trembling. **Experience/Knowledge**—People hesitate and tremble when they are nervous. **My Inference**—Montre is nervous about the action he is about to take.
- 3. What Is Known**—Montre is considering whether to head for a shuttle. He talks about seeing Earth. **Experience/Knowledge**—A shuttle is a type of vehicle. A space shuttle travels through space. **My Inference**—Montre is planning to fly the shuttle to Earth.

Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should provide responses close to the sample answers.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should be able to make reasonable inferences for at least two of the three categories.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Student Lesson Summary**. Focus on the everyday example given. Then brainstorm one or two literary examples with students. Finally, have them complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 73.

Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

- 1.** *b; Sample: I open doors slowly and tiptoe when I'm trying to be really quiet.*
- 2.** *a; Sample: These are articles of clothing people wear in winter.*
- 3.** *a; Sample: People count the bills in their wallet to make sure they have enough money for something.*
- 4.** *b; Sample: Everything he bought is a breakfast food.*
- 5.** *b; Sample: Cupcakes with candles are used to celebrate birthdays.*
- 6.** *Sample: **Place:** a French-speaking country in the Tropics or similar hot environment; **Time:** middle of the night; **Clues:** dark and deserted streets, couldn't read French, hot all year-round*